(a) whether the Central Government called an emergency meeting of Health Ministers of nine States in the month of June, 2007 in the wake of reports of Chikungunya spreading across the country after its outbreak in Kerala;

(b) whether according to his Ministry, Chikungunya is likely to stay for 3-4 more years in the country;

(c) if so, whether the Central Government have promised a special package for Chikungunya affected States to deal with the disease;

(d) whether Government have allocated Rs. 20 crores to fight Chikungunya in the country; and

(e) if so, what concrete measures have been taken, so far?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMAN1 RAM DOSS): (a) to (e) A meeting was called in New Delhi to review the Chikungunya situation in nine states namely, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu on 21st June 2007.

Yes, Sir, the Chikungunya is likely to stay for 3-4 more years, however, it is expected that the disease will not occur in epidemic form after 3-4 years in areas which have been presently affected because it gives life long immunity.

In addition to supply of regular logistics (Adulticides and larvicides), during 2006-07, an amount of Rs. 21.60 crore was released as emergency package to 11 States, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Andman & Nicober Islands, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharastra, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu for prevention and control activities of Chikungunya. Similarly, during 2007-08, Rs. 17.29 crores have been allotted to nine States and Rs. 8.75 crores have been released in first phase.

The funds were utilized by the States for additional larvicides/Pyrethrum Extract, fogging machines, etc. for intensive prevention and control measures. The funds were also used for intensive IEC activities and social mobilization activities for community awareness to avoid mosquito breeding in domestic/peri domestic areas.

Election by Secret Ballot

†*13. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS:
SHRI BALAVANT ALIAS BAL APTE:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the state of preparedness to hold secret ballot by September, 2007 as per the order of the Court for granting recognition to unions; and

(b) the steps being taken by Government to extend same facilities to all registered unions, as the recognized ones, to ensure fair elections?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) In compliance with directives of Hon'ble High Court of Delhi to hold secret ballot by September, 2007, the

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi

Ministry of Railways have constituted a Committee in the month of April, 2007 under the Chairmanship of Shri C.L. Kaw, retired Chairman, Railway Board to decide the modalities to hold the secret ballot for recognition of the Unions On the Railways. The Terms of Reference of the Committee are as under:

(i) to frame the modalities to conduct the secret ballot to recognize the Unions;

(ii) to form code of conduct/discipline for the elections on the lines of Code of Discipline of Ministry of Labour suitable for Indian Railways;

(iii) to function as a nodal body for conducting and supervising the secret ballot; and

(iv) to suggest the Mechanism for arbitration on disputes arising out of elections.

Since the exercise is being undertaken for the first time on the Railways and the task is stupendous, it is expected to take some time.

After initial work of framing the modalities is completed, further steps to hold the elections will be taken.

(b) The issue of establishing level playing field between recognized and unrecognized unions is being deliberated upon by the Secret Ballot Committee.

Conversion of fertile land into industrial area

*14. DR. E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry is aware of the conversion of fertile land into industrial area leading to migration and decrease of agricultural production in rural area; and

(b) if so, what are the steps taken by inter-Ministerial meeting to regulate the same?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) As per available estimates, there is a marginal decline in cultivable land from 185.09 million ha. in 1980-81 to 183.10 million ha. in 2004-05 due to increase in population and diversion of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes such as urbanization, roads, industries, etc. Though there has been a marginal decline in the cultivable land in 2004-05 as compared to 1980-81, the net sown area has more or less remained the same or slightly increased by 1.06 million ha. during this period which mainly contribute to the food grain production.

Since the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Act, 2005 and SEZ Rules, 2006 came into effect on 10th February, 2006, formal approval has been granted for setting up of 362 SEZs. It may be pointed out that in these 362 formal approvals, the total land area involved is only about 48,700 ha. Of these, 90 approvals are in respect of State Industrial Development Corporations/State Government Agencies involving land area of about 21,400 ha.

The Government of India constituted an Empowered Group of Ministers (EGOM) to consider the issues relating to SEZs and the EGOM at its meeting held on 5th April, 2007 recommended that: